The

THOREAU SOCIETY

BULLETIN

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THOREAU'S TWO WALKS: STRUCTURE AND MEANING

by Lauriat Lane, Jr.

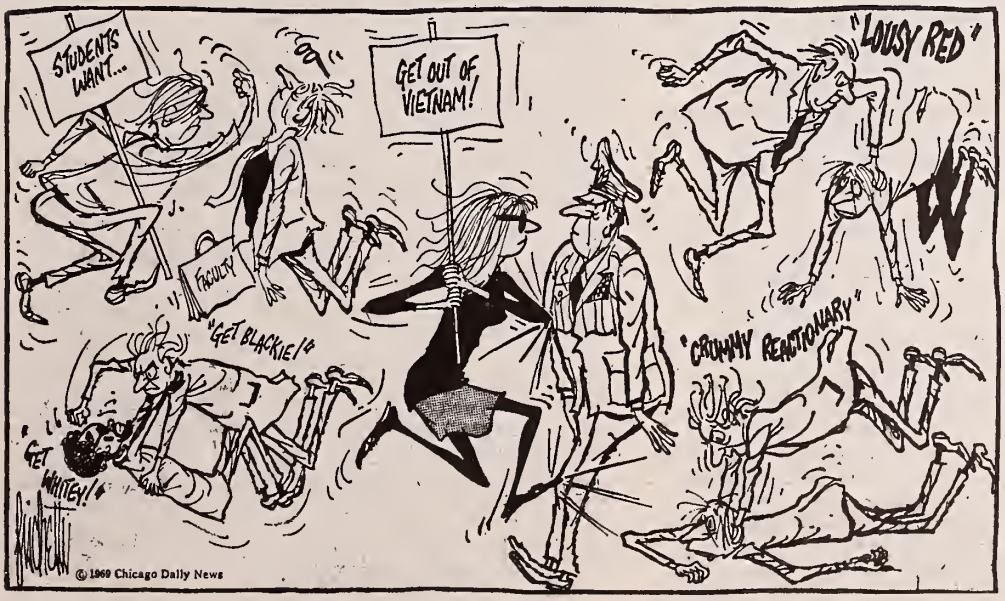
Henry Thoreau's first wholly independent, wholly original essays were two "walks": "A Walk to Wachusett" and "A Winter Walk."(1) As their economical, almost allegorical titles suggest, these two essays establish and exemplify two archetypal "walks" that remain basic models for Thoreau's imaginative prose writings. Sherman Paul has itemized the key terms of these two archetypes: "In 'A Walk to Wachusett' and 'A Winter Walk,' however, he began to make walking the explicit symbol of man's life, and he fully employed in the structure of the essays those archetypal patterns of morning and evening, sunrise and sunset, ascent and descent, mountain and plain, woods and village, summer and winter that became the warp and woof of the Week and Walden."(2)

This does not suggest how much the two essays differ in essential structure and in the way meaning emerges from that structure. One walk is a quest, linear, exploratory, through the unfamiliar toward revelation; its total pattern spells out a transcendental allegory. One walk is a ramble, orbital, responsive, through the familiar toward completion; its total pattern hints at a symbolic structure, at the same time more private and more universal and perhaps unconsciously so. Each walk is organized toward these separate ends.

"A Walk to Wachusett," the earlier and less complex of the two essays, is a minor excursion of the Thoreau took all his life. Its basic structure is the actual three-part shape of the excursion itself: to the mountain, on the mountain, from the mountain, a structure that stayed essentially unchanged through Thoreau's revisions of the essay. (3) These three divisions are only a rough indication of the fuller and more interesting structure of the actual essay. The meaning of "A Walk to Wachusett," first suggested by the irregular ode, "With Frontier Strength Ye Stand Your Ground," emerges with allegorical explicitness and thoroughness from this fuller structure, as Paul has shown.(4)

The full dialectic of the three 24-hour phases of the narrative is best suggested by the relation of their respective parts. Each of the four mornings in the essay has its special importance: the first announces the general "peace and purity" (p. 166) of the natural world; the second, in "gray twilight" (p. 173) and at first clouded, hints the more ambivalent quality of the mountain world; the third, sunny and "more and more transparent"

Remember the Good Old Days When Most People Lived Lives of Quiet Desperation?



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"Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant? . . . I can imagine it, but to experience it—that is another thing!"—H.D.T.

"How can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seed-time of character."—Journal for Aug. 7, 1854.

(p. 179), shows what knowledge results from meeting the challenge of this mountain, so different from Katahdin; and the fourth returns us to the world of merely human hospitality and refreshment. The first noon directs our attention both to "Virgil, away in Rome" (p. 169) and to local topography; the second to "Virgil and Wordsworth" and "the sky shutting down" around the mountain top (p. 176); the third brings us down the mountain "to the abodes of men" (p. 183), only later in the afternoon "mechanically repeating some familiar measure" (p. 184). On the first evening they "restored our morning elasticity" (p. 172) and felt themselves more "western" but were handed their village newspaper to read; the second, the weather cleared on the mountain top; the third, they looked back at "the grandeur of the mountain" (p. 185). The first night brought them the sounds of water and crickets; the second, wind, cold, moon, and stars; the third, only rest.

This pattern of three days and nights is counterpointed against the three basic parts of the trip, to, on, and from the mountain. This counterpoint fits the facts of the journey, but it also hints a lack of adjustment between the rhythms and conditions of the plain and those of the mountain. At least the effect is there, consciously or otherwise. Apart from this, the transcendental meaning of the journey and the ascent is clear and unqualified, conveyed by the essay's full structure: "Having once had this inspiration, the plainsman need not despair. He could live in the view, if not on the summit, of the mountain."(5)

And yet, just after the poem and before the narrative itself Thoreau states his "misgivings that thereafter no visible fairyland would exist for us" (p. 166). Like other romantics, Thoreau voices his doubt that reality can ever match the anticipation of it--"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter"--especially so transcendental an anticipation as that expressed in "With Frontier Strength." With its fulfillment, the essay does suggest a kind of loss--disappointment is too strong a word--a double loss is that reality has replaced aspiration and literature has replaced reality. This sense of loss is conveyed by the formal progress of "A Walk to Wachusett," especially the third part. And successful though the narrative is, stylistically and structurally, it lacks--perhaps by the very obviousness of its success--enough imaginative intensity or complexity to compensate for the downward conversion in Thoreauvian terms from a transcendental ideal to historical and linguistic actuality.

"A Walk to Wachusett" and "A Winter Walk" have obvious resemblances. However, except in a broad sense, "A Winter Walk" differs from "A Walk to Wachusett" in structure and in how structure suggests meaning. "A Walk to Wachusett," like any quest, has a goal, "Wachusett, who like me / Standest alone without society" (p. 165). The mountain is "the great fact of 'A Walk to Wachusett,' . . . the landmark of Thoreau's destiny."(6) "A Winter Walk" has no such "great fact." Potentially sacred places, a glen, a glade, a hilltop, a lake, a hut, are <u>primus inter pares</u> in the essay's evolving structure. The only "great fact" of the essay's structure is the total process it encloses.

As there is no goal or destination to the walk--apart from the return home at the very end, which provides at best a frame and a conclusion--the basic structure is the single day that contains the walk. This single day gives an obvious unity and external pattern to contain the events of the narrative. And the essay does return to where it started: the time scheme completes the 24-hour round; we end as we began, indoors thinking of the winter world; the snow starts to fall again as we approach the end of the essay and our winter walk. John A. Christie draws an apt analogy between the structure of such a winter walk and the daily routine of explorers in the Far North: "Their winter walks from their ships or their camps moved in modest radii from a cynosure to which they hastened back after a few hours' exploration--a symmetry of travel which exactly matched Thoreau's own winter activities in Concord."(7)

For Sherman Paul the meaning of "A Winter Walk" lies partly in how it announces many of Thoreau's later concerns: "the scenery of his life . . . the rude shelter he later built . . . Walden Pond itself."(8) Of the structure of the essay only the opening, when "sunrise brought back some of the virtues of spring," and the moralizing conclusion back in the village at day's end seem to him to be directly meaningful. But the explicit moral of the ending, though linked to the deserted woodman's hut, seems added rather than arrived at.

One continuing structural device in the essay is the dialectic between winter and summer. The narrative is born forward upon a rhythmic alternation between these two opposite seasons and between material and allusion appropriate to each. There is little sense of the yearly cycle as such. Instead, this rapid, continuous alternation between opposites suggests at once dialectic tension and near identity, just as it might if the effect were visual, which it almost is. The order of the paragraphs as printed in <u>The Dial</u> supports the larger rhythms of this alternation even more fully, if possible, than the order in the version reprinted in <u>Excursions</u>.

We have, so far, as unifying and quasi-structural forces in "A Winter Walk," the general theme of nature in winter, the general chronology of the single day, the external framework of the house in the village and the two snow falls, and the continuing opposition-identity of winter's cold and summer's heat. These, combined, are surely enough to make the essay more than a random collection of comments, especially given its relative brevity. But so far the walk itself, the day's ramble, save for the initial removal into the world of nature and the final return indoors, remains random.

The stages of Thoreau's "winter walk" occur in the essay as follows: the midst of the pines, a glade, (meadows), a lonely glen, a deserted woodman's hut, the top of a high hill, the brink of a woodland lake, the bay and then the course of the river, after which we retrace our steps to the village. (The "frost-bound meadows" [p. 208] are a parenthetic hypothesis in the mind of the narrator.) These ordinary yet archetypal settings pose the same problem of symbolic interpretation as in the poetry of Robert Frost: "Frost's mode of symbolic reference is of a special kind. It is one which does not work primarily through allusion, metaphor, allegory, or explicit comment, but grows, rather from the special perspective which the poet adopts . . . . This point of vantage is the rural world, and the poetic vision it reveals, pastoral."(9)

Once the "sacred threshold" at the edge of the woods has been crossed, we have the following, in order: glade-glen-hut-hill-lake-river, all of them, by literary and anthrological tradition, potentially "sacred" places, (10) and all of them directed practically and traditionally toward some kind of worship of nature. The order in which these places are encountered and the possible relations among them become all-important in recognizing the meaningful structure of "A Winter Walk." The total progression moves toward a fuller commitment to the natural and transcendental world and then back from such commitment. The glade is the most tame of all woodland sites--vide Pope and the other neo-classic poets. The glen is wilder and more romantic--more typical of Gray or Scott or Wordsworth. The hut in the woods suggests the hermit's direct commitment to a life in nature, and the hill is an obvious image of physical and spiritual aspiration. The lake is in one sense a return toward earth, but "it is the earth's liquid eye; a mirror in the breast of nature" (p. 213), and it still reflects heaven. The river, more endowed with life and movement, mirrors a more broken image of heaven and runs, at last, into the eternal ocean.

Each pair--glade and glen, hut and hill, lake and river--contains a more passive and more active version of the same kind of commitment. The glade is level and self-contained, but the glen suggests wilder irregularity and rises upward. From the hut only the smoke rises toward heaven--a central image in Thoreau's prose and poetry--but as "A Walk to Wachusett" has already shown, man himself climbs the mountain: "Through your defiles windeth the way to heaven" (p. 165). The lake's centrality and stillness give way to the life and motion of "the meandering river" (p. 216), with its more worldly lessons of order and discipline, "a beautiful illustration of the laws of obedience" (p. 217). Earth, then air, then water, with fire latent but hidden throughout and explicit at the end of the essay.

In spite of these patterns--or perhaps because of them--there remains no still point, no "great fact." The narrative of "A Winter Walk," unlike that of "A Walk to Wachusett," becomes a paradigm of irresolution. Passing through many potentially sacred places, the author and the reader find no sure center in any. By the wisdom of hindsight the essay does prophesy more durable experiences to come in A Week and Walden--although even these cannot last forever--experiences more productive of sacred communion with the natural world's higher identity. But in itself it narrates a ramble through a set of possibilities for symbolic or mythic meaning, rather than a systematic allegory of such meaning. It is, mythically if not literally, optative. It does provide moral affirmations at the end. But the blended images in the narrative of the dying afternoon, the river running to the sea, the falling snow with its curious likeness to that in James Joyce's "The Dead," and even the "infinite worlds" of the final quotation from James Thomson's The Seasons--all these suggest not transcendental self-discovery but poetic awareness, not supernatural conviction but natural mystery.

NOTES

(1) Henry Thoreau, Excursions (Boston, 1893), pp. 163-186, 199-224 [Riverside Edition]. All quotations are from this conveniently available edition.

(2) The Shores of America (Urbana, 1958), p. 157.

(3) Lauriat Lane, Jr., "Thoreau at Work: Four Versions of 'A Walk to Wachusett,'" Bulletin of the New York Public Library, LXIX (January 1965), 14-16.

(4) The Shores of America, pp. 157-165.

(5) The Shores of America, p. 165.

(6) The Shores of America, p. 157.

(7) Thoreau as World Traveler (New York, 1965), p. 192.

(8) The Shores of America, p. 169.

(9) John F. Lynen, The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost (New Haven, 1960), p. 7.

(10) Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1959), pp. 20-29; Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume 2: Mythical Thought (New Haven, 1955), pp. 83-104.

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VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THOREAU

by R. Majumdar

In 1917 Virginia Woolf wrote an article on Thoreau in the Times Literary Supplement.(1) What Mrs. Woolf said about Thoreau showed her interest in the American writer and her kinship with certain aspects of his work. Mrs. Woolf shared Thoreau's preoccupation with 'the moment': "to burn always with this hard, gem-like flame"(2) was their common aim. To catch and convey the moments of vision as they flitted across one's mirror of consciousness was what Virginia Woolf attempted to do. And so did Thoreau. "The millions are awake enough for physical labour; but...only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive,"(3) Thoreau wrote in Walden. This reminds one of Virginia Woolf--her 'obsession' with the intense moment: "There was no past, no future; merely the moment in its ring of light, and our bodies; and the inevitable climax, the ecstasy."(4)

Like Virginia Woolf Thoreau was interested in what Mrs. Woolf called the "cloudy, yeasty, precious stuff the soul".(5) Thoreau's 'simplicity', Mrs. Woolf said, was "a way of setting free the delicate and complicated machinery of the soul ..."(6) Virginia Woolf had the same introspective meditative vision as in Thoreau. What they cared most for was to know the nature of reality, the nature of life. They believed that it was only in silence and solitude that one could feel what reality, what life felt like. Reality, they thought, could be apprehended only in fitful glimpses of the contemplative mind--when freed from the heat and excitement, the fever and fret of the external world, the mind communed with itself in serenity--"when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity."(7) As Thoreau said: "Silence is when we hear inwardly, sound when we hear outwardly. She is Truth's speaking-trumpet...through her all revelations have been made."(8) Truth or reality, Virginia Woolf thought as did Thoreau, could be attained not by "the irritable reaching after facts" (to borrow a phrase from Keats), nor by ratiocination, but through intuitive vision. Thoreau asked: "If we know all things...mechanically merely, should we know anything really?...We seek too soon to ally the perceptions of the mind to the experience of the hand, to prove our gossamer truths practical, to show their connection with everyday life, to relate them to the cider mill and the banking institution."(9) Virginia Woolf too did not take for granted "the reality of here and now," but probed incessantly the deeper spiritual reality that lay at the core of things and revealed itself fitfully to the individual consciousness like "matches struck unexpectedly in the dark."(10)

In Thoreau as in Virginia Woolf one finds a mystical, a transcendental attitude towards life. Both found ecstasy in the contemplation of things. The most ordinary actions and experiences of everyday life touched the inner recesses of their souls. They wanted to attain infinity in the finite, eternity in the present. They both loved the world of things--plants, woods, trees--and saw into the "life of things." Losing personality, they "became what they beheld." It was a mystical experience--when one lost oneself--one's separate identity, one's consciousness of the world outside and became a soul. As Wordsworth

said:

"...that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on, -
Until the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things."(11)

Similarly, Thoreau thought that "Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations."(12) The chapter on Sounds in Walden is a brilliant document of Thoreau's mystical experience: "I sat in my sunny doorway...rapt in a revery,...in undisturbed solitude and stillness...until by the sun falling in at my window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time."(3) One is immediately reminded of Mrs. Ramsay's transcendental experience in Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse: "...that was what now she often felt the need of--to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone...to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others...it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures." (14) Rhoda and Louis in Virginia Woolf's The Waves are also exponents of this mysticism. Louis, for instance, loses his identity in his contemplation of nature: "Now they have all gone," said Louis, "I am alone...I am left standing by the wall among the flowers...I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world..."(15) Apart from this mystical vision, Virginia Woolf shared with Thoreau another recurrent theme in her books--the problem of human relationships. Mrs. Woolf was unhappy about the incompleteness of human relations--the isolation and disintegration of the modern individual--and the difficulty of communication between one person and another. This was a major motif in her novels. The heroine of her first novel said: "I hate these divisions, one person all in the dark about another person."(16) Mrs. Woolf found in Thoreau much the same problem and the same desire for closer communion with human beings. As she wrote in her article on Thoreau: "When we have read his books ...we are left with a strange feeling of distance; here is a man who is trying to communicate but who cannot do it...All human intercourse was infinitely difficult; the distance between one friend and another was unfathomable; human relationships were very precarious and terribly apt to end in disappointment."(17) And Thoreau himself said: "I think to say to my friend. There is but one interval between us. You are on one side of it, I on the other. You know as much about it as I, how wide, how impassable it is."(18)

NOTES

(1) "Thoreau", Times Literary Supplement, London, July 12, 1917, p. 326.
(2) See Walter Pater, Studies In the History of Renaissance, London, 1873, p. 210.
(3) Walden, introduction by Basil Willey, London, 1952, p. 105.
(4) The Waves, p. 276.
(5) "The Russian point of view", The Common Reader I, 1925, p. 228.
(6) "Thoreau", Times Literary Supplement, London, July 12, 1917, p. 326.
(7) Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 99.
(8) Thoreau, Writings, Vol. I, pp. 418-419.
(9) Thoreau, Journal, The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Vol. 8, ed. H.G.O. Blake, 19-20.
(10) Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p. 249.
(11) Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798.
(12) Walden, p. 190.
(13) Walden, p. 128.
(14) To The Lighthouse, p. 99.
(15) The Waves, p. 10.
(16) The Voyage Out, pp. 369-370.
(17) "Thoreau", Times Literary Supplement, London, July 12, 1917, p. 326.
(18) "Early Spring in Massachusetts," see The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Vol. 5, ed. H.G.O. Blake, p. 252.

A THOREAU DOCUMENT

by Alan Seaburg

Francis H. Allen's bibliography of Thoreau indicates that only three obituaries were published at his death. One of these was in the Unitarian weekly, The Christian Register. As a Unitarian Universalist, I was both surprised and delighted. Surprised because Thoreau had "signed off" from the rolls of the Concord branch of this denomination; delighted by the perceptiveness of the person who wrote the brief notice. Perhaps the fact that Thoreau's funeral service was held at the Unitarian church and that he had a number of influential Unitarian friends had something to do with the item's appearance. The Christian Register was published in Boston as a general religious newspaper with a special interest in Unitarianism. Eventually it became the leading Unitarian periodical. I think that it is worth quoting the entire obituary for those who may be unfamiliar with it. In the issue for May 17th in a section marked "Deaths", usually reserved for brief mention of deceased laymen, appears the following statement:

> In Concord, 7th inst., Mr. Henry D. Thoreau, about 45 yrs. His disease was consumption, and his last hours were among the calmest of his life. Thus has passed away one of the most original thinkers our country has produced. His works will always be read with profound attention, as no man ever lived closer to Nature, and reported her secrets more eloquently. His "Walden" and "Week on the Concord River" are striking marks of his genius.

THOREAU AND DAVID STARR JORDAN

by Frank Davidson

Recently while working on a history of the English Department at Indiana University, I had cause to look through, among other books and journals, David Starr Jordan's The Days of a Man, 2 vols. (World Book Co., New York. 1922), and copies of a school journal, The Indiana Student that operated in the 1880's and 1890's. In these there were several allusions to Thoreau. Jordan was at I.U. as professor from 1879 to 1885 and as president from 1885 to 1891. One of his comments runs as follows:

"Among the more interesting citizens [of

Bloomington] was one unique in his way, Henry S. Bates, the shoemaker. Soon after my arrival I gave a lecture on Thoreau, at the close of which Bates and Karsell the grocer remained to talk with me. Both, I found, were well informed as to Thoreau's life and writings. Bates, seated at his bench, used to discuss with students and professors the problem of literature and life. The fact that though without much formal education he did a good deal of thinking and was withal a man of generous sympathies and friendly interest, brought like-minded to sit at his feet. So the shoe shop came to be known as the 'Bates School of Philosophy,' a well-deserved name which persisted for years." I, 194-195.

"But of all authors who influenced my thought and writing at Cornell [where he graduated], I should put Thoreau first. Something about his crisp, crystalline sentences always appealed to me. His love of nature, his sharply defined silhouettes of the beasts and trees, especially his appeals for personal freedom made on me a profound impression. His address on John Brown, for example, affected me more than any other political writing whatever; not so much because of the tragedy which called it forth as for the illumination thrown by it on Brown's life, death, and purpose--the suppression of all thought of self, by which the man became 'Old Brown no longer, but an Angel of Light.'" I. 74.

In The Indiana Student, XI, No. 3, 1884, p. 53:

"Jordan states: 'It has been said reproachfully of Thoreau, that, with a genius which might have directed great enterprises, he preferred to lead a huckleberry party. In this matter I have always sympathized with Thoreau. It is easier to find leaders in the battles of the world than pioneers in the field of science.'"
Indiana University

NOTES AND QUERIES . . . .

We have recently come across a supply of old bulletins and so a limited number of Bulletins 10, 11, 20, 53, 55, 57, and 58, formerly listed as out-of-print are now available from the secretary at 25¢ each. These are in addition to the back issues available as listed in the spring bulletin.

Charles Tweedy (129 Powderhouse Blvd., Somerville, Mass.) asks where the following quotation from Thoreau can be found: "Man's moral nature is a riddle which only eternity can solve."

Prof. Paul Williams of Elsah, Illinois, recently presented to the Thoreau Society Archives a number of photographs of Mount Kathadin, Thoreau's favorite mountain in Maine.

Samuel Arthur Jones, in a letter to Alfred Hosmer of July 23, 1893 which is now in the Hosmer Collection of the Concord Free Public Library, states that the edition of WALDEN that the Walter Scott Co. issued in England in 1886 is a pirated edition, paying no royalties to the Thoreau estate. Was Thoreau honored (?) by any other pirated editions of his writings before the copyrights expired?

Federal District Judge Charles E. Wyzanski Jr. of Boston in a ruling on April 1, 1969 which declared unconstitutional the section of the draft law under which a man can be exempted as a conscientious objector only if his objection to war is religious, stated, "Often it is harder to detect a fraudulent adherent to a religious creed than to recognize a sincere moral protestant. We all can discern Thoreau's integrity more quickly than we might detect some churchman's hypocrisy." (NEW YORK TIMES, April 2, 1969).

Richard E. Friedman, director of the Better Government Association in Chicago, had one of his investigators register under the name of Henry David Thoreau in a local flop house. He was searching for evidence of vote-buying and falsification along Skid Row. Sure enough, Thoreau's name showed up later on precinct registration sheets as a bona fide Chicago voter. (NEW YORK TIMES, Sept. 3, 1969)

Ralph Chapman of Brattleboro, Vt., reports to us that on a boat ride through the canals of Amsterdam, Holland this summer he noted a cargo vessel bearing the name Henry David Thoreau tied up at one of the docks.

According to a "profile" of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of Canada by Edith Iglauer in the NEW YORKER of July 5, 1969 (p. 40), Father Robert Bernier, Trudeau's professor at the Jesuit College de Jean-de-Brebeuf, persuaded Trudeau to read and discuss Thoreau--"particularly what Thoreau said about the wilderness, which was very appealing to Canadians."

A program entitled "Walden Revisited," with slides by Ivan Massar, readings from Thoreau by Rev. Randall Gibson, and piano by Joseph Fish was held in the First Parish Church in Concord on June 25, 1969 for the benefit of the local Draft Information Center.

In reply to Robert Stowell's queries about Thoreau's boats and nautical knowledge, Willard Bonner of Buffalo, N.Y. replies, "The Musketaquid, heavy, cumbersome, amphibious, I think had one mast and one sail when the boat was in operation. The second mast was in reality a tent pole that could serve as a spare. So with the other sail. He knew what it was to be dismasted. See his early letter to Charles Wyatt Rice.

"The matter of luff and close haul is a bit more puzzling, but I think it comes clear when we consider that at Plymouth he found himself at the helm of a good sailing craft for the first time with a stretch of open water before him many many times greater than the miniscule rivulets of the Concord area not excluding Fair Haven Pond and the reaches of the Merrimac. The thing he is trying to say in the account of the Plymouth adventure is that ocean navigation he found to be so very much more skilful and sensitive than he had ever known in the clumsy 'bread trough' of a boat he had had. He seems fascinated with coming up into the wind, with how sensitive a good craft can be, and the new meaning close haul and luff acquired. He probably knew these words from boyhood, but they did not have any vibrant meaning until he really sailed lively, open water, rather like the difference for an inlander between tide before he has seen the actual tide and afterward. Thus when he says he 'learned the meaning' of the words, he is registering discovery of a fact and an experience lying back of words he already knew. (He had this same experience, it

might be noted, with the word tide.)"

The Concord Free Public Library has recently acquired a manuscript bill of sale which reads:

"Concord, Nov. 20, 1861

"Town of Concord to H.D.Thoreau, Dr

"For inspecting the Stone Bridge on the main stream & reporting on its condition.

"Recd Payt

"H. D. Thoreau"

Thus Thoreau was still working as a civil engineer as recently as five months before his death. The CONCORD TOWN REPORT for 1862, incidentally, records that he was paid three dollars for this task.

The NEW YORK TIMES for May 16, 1969, reports "Burgling in the nude is the latest underworld tactic around Trujillo in northern Peru, the newspaper La Prensa reported. It said that thieves doffed their clothes before breaking into houses and picked them up on the way out. The paper said that watch-dogs were so perplexed that they did not attack the nude thieves." Can it be that the thieves have been reading the passage in WALDEN where Thoreau says, "I have heard of a dog that barked at every stranger who approached his master's premises with clothes on, but was easily quieted by a naked thief."

A documentary on Thoreau is planned for one of the major TV networks this winter according to TV GUIDE for Sept. 27, 1969. Kirk Douglas will narrate.

Collier Books has announced that GranvilleHicks will do a volume on Thoreau in their Masters of World Literature series.

An ad for Bergen Evans' DICTIONARY OF QUOTATIONS (Delacorte Press) that has appeared in numerous newspapers begins, "If you want to say something hip, turn to Henry Thoreau," and then points out their book includes 58 quotations from Thoreau.

Among doctoral dissertations recently announced as "in progress" are Rosemary Whitaker's "A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS: Thoreau's Experiment in Transcendental Harmony" at the Univ. of Oklahoma; Richard Fleck's "Thoreau's Interest in Myth, Fable and Legend" at the University of New Mexico; andJohn K. Packard's "Robert Frost's Debt to Emerson, Thoreau, and William James: A Study in Sources" at Brown University.

John Nickols of Concord reports to us that last spring he talked with a young student who participated in the now famous sit-in at University Hall on the Harvard campus, and when he asked the student what they did during the seventeen hours of the sit-in, he replied, "We discussed Thoreau and the moral justification for what we were doing."

In an ad in the May 17, 1969 SATURDAY REVIEW for their new "Men of Thought, Men of Action" filmstrip series, Doubleday describes Thoreau as a "soul brother." The series is one on Black History.

Prof. John Burk of the botany department at Smith College gives an illustrated lecture on "The Botany of Thoreau's Cape Cod Expeditions."

A full-page ad in the Sept. 27, 1969 WASHINGTON POST for a real estate development at Lake Linganore in Frederick, Md., devotes two-thirds of the page to a quotation from Thoreau on lakes.

A huge poster picture of Thoreau labeled simply "a different drummer" was carried in the anti-war parade in New York City on April 5, 1969.

In a newly discovered hitherto unpublished short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald entitled"Dearly Beloved" included in the new FITGERALD/HEMINGWAY ANNUAL:1969, the protagonist is described as reading Thoreau's WALDEN "for the third time." The story is reprinted in the Aug. 20, 1969 NEW YORK TIMES.

At a Seminar in American Literature at the University of Jabalpur in India on January 20, 1969, R.S.Tiwari read a paper on "Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' in the Modern Context" and at a similar seminar at Baring Union Christian College in Batala, India on February 15, 1969, Dr. Jack H. Adamson read a paper on "Thoreau and the Transcendentalists" and Dr. P.S.Sastri one on Thoreau.

Thomas Blanding of Grafton, Mass. has recently pointed out to me that Bronson Alcott in his journal for February 13, 1848 indicates that Thoreau on that date was still working on his "Civil Disobedience" lecture. Thus Thoreau's lecture of February 23, 1848 before the Concord Lyceum was not a repeat of his lecture of January 26, 1848, but the second part of it.

In E.M.Forster's novel A Room with a View (New York, 1923, p. 192), one of the minor characters--and a delightfully individualistic character at that--named, not inappropriately "Mr. Emerson," has the motto "Mistrust all enterprises that require new clothes" painted on the cornice of his wardrobe. Was not Mr. Forster thinking of "Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes" in the "Economy" chapter of WALDEN?

Massachusetts State Senator James DeNormandie recently announced that he is "informally seeking the acquisition of Walden Pond reservation by the National Park Service."

In reply to Alan Tenenbaum's inquiry in Bulletin 107 about an image in the final chapter of WALDEN, Malcolm Ferguson of Concord writes, "This is the Heiligenschein, detailed more recently in M. Minnaert's THE NATURE OF LIGHT & COLOUR IN THE OPEN AIR (New York: Dover, 1954, pp. 230-234): "In the early morning when the sun is still low and casts our long shadow on the dewy grass, we perceive a remarkable aureole of light, uncoloured, lying near and above the shadow of our head. . . Each of the dewdrops forms an image of the sun on the blade of grass supporting it, and . . . rays are emitted from the image along almost the same path of the incident rays, i.e. in the general direction of the sun."

A recent issue of the CHICAGO MAROON, the University of Chicago student paper, mentions a "Henry David Thoreau the Bums Out Society," but an inquiry to the editors of the paper reveals it to be product of their imagination.

A recent announcement in the Appalachian Mountain Club BULLETIN states that "Thoreau Falls" in Zealand Notch of the White Mountains National Forest has recently been set aside as a "scenic area."

The School of Living Press (2400 Nostrand Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.) has recently announced forthcoming publication of a series of volumes on Thoreau by Herbert and Lucy Roseman on such topics as "Thoreau in Latin America," "Thoreau: Anarchist or Abolitionist?" and "Thoreau and the American Dream."

We are indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: T.Bailey,A.Brooks,J.Broderick,H.Cahoon,M.Campbell,J.Donovan,R.Epler,M.Fenn, H.Gottschalk,D.Kamen-Kaye,T.Longstreth,O.Lund,B. Lyttle,A.Lowmes,S.Morris,V.Munoz,A.McGrath,M.Moss, R.Needham,P.Oehser,R.Poland,M.Rowse,R.Schaedle,W. Ralls,A.Small,R.Story,A.Seaburg,J.Vickers,S.Wellman, R.Wheeler, and P.Williams. Please keep the secretary informed of new Thoreau items as they appear and old ones he was missed.

MORE DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS ON THOREAU.

With the permission of University Microfilms of Ann Arbor, Mich., we continue printing herewith reproductions of abstracts of dissertations on Thoreau. The full dissertations are available from University Microfilms at the prices given at the ends of the articles.

FOLKLORE IN THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU: A STUDY AND A COMPENDIUM-INDEX.

(Order No. 67-10,093)

Lonnie Leon Willis, Ph.D.
University of Colorado, 1966

Supervisor: Professor Charles H. Nilon

Henry David Thoreau confessed grandly to having traveled a great deal in Concord, Massachusetts. If his confession had been any less grand it would have been an understatement, for he did indeed travel widely in his home village. Constantly afoot when health permitted, Thoreau studied both village and villagers, recording his findings in writing. From excursions to other parts of New England, he brought additional observations, many concerning customs, sayings, local history, language, and practices. In short, Thoreau quite naturally collected the folklore of people he knew and of people he met.

It has not been generally recognized that Thoreau's published writings are sources of folklore. However, Thoreau was deeply interested in the "antiquities" of the New World, and his interest is reflected in his works. Today's reader who shares this interest in folklore of the American past can actually profit from Thoreau's writings in two ways: (1) by sharing with Thoreau the folk material which he intentionally recorded as "antiquities"; (2) by distinguishing folklore in material which Thoreau set down about his own times. But however the reader approaches Thoreau's writings, he can find numerous examples of the different types of folklore: beliefs, practices, sayings, legends, proverbs, etc.

To study what is essentially an unexamined area of Thoreau's life, his interest in collecting folklore, one obviously requires some kind of reference guide to the material. Such a means for studying the folklore is made available by this dissertation in the form of a Compendium-Index which not only provides references to sources but also suggests something of the nature of material to be found. Within the Compendium-Index Thoreau's folklore is divided into eight major groups, then alphabetically indexed within specific classifications of folk material. Each major group is prefaced by a brief descriptive introduction, designed to help the reader determine immediately the extent to which Thoreau recorded different types of folklore.

The reader's initial conclusion is likely to be that Thoreau demonstrated a considerable interest in the lore of New England "folk," of the ordinary human beings of his part of the country. But another conclusion will be that Thoreau's activity as a folklorist reveals him to have been a more human personality than his popular image has suggested.

Therefore, to study Thoreau as a folklorist is to corroborate the new image of Henry Thoreau as a warm, human, and personable man. And the folklore which he recorded in his writings contributes to an understanding of the new life in the New World. Perhaps the Compendium-Index in this dissertation can serve as a scholarly tool to aid in the further understanding of both Thoreau the man and of Thoreau the folklorist.

Microfilm $5.30; Xerography $18.70. 416 pages.

THOREAU'S USE OF THE BIBLE.

(Order No. 67-6092)

John Robert Burns, Ph.D.
University of Notre Dame, 1966

This dissertation examines Thoreau's diversified use of the Bible, whereby he implements his style and re-inforces interest in his doctrine. By means of multiple references to Scripture, Thoreau furnished his doctrine with a tone of authenticity, and thereby assured the success of his work even among his contemporaries.

Two major divisions comprise this study: an expository essay discussing his use of the Bible and a Biblical glossary to Thoreau's writings.

Part I of the essay is a study of Thoreau's use of Biblical characters and places, which he employs to express some of his ideas regarding time, the purpose of life, the futility of a materialistic philosophy and the possibility of recovering the Edenic pristine innocence.

Part II investigates the categories of Scriptural allusions which Thoreau integrates with his philosophical language. By weaving Scriptural phraseology into his philosophy, Thoreau adds potency to his admonitions by which he intends to life the townsmen, and mankind, out of their lethargy and awaken them to a renewed sense of values.

Part III of the essay contains an exposition of Thoreau's ambivalent use of Scripture for comic and didactic effect. By means of juxtapositions, contrast, incongruity and hyperhole, he enlivens his language with the freshness that reflects his personal approach to life.

In Part IV I have tried to clarify the Biblical principle in Thoreau's imagery which he applies to sound, color, light, movement, and time. His own awareness of life leads him to emphasize the indispensable quality of keenness of sense for fully experiencing life and consciously responding to nature.

Proof of Thoreau's awareness that characteristic Scriptural language would lend effectiveness to his style is the subject of Part V in which I note significant revisions made by Thoreau. A comparison of passages from the Journal version to the first version of Walden reveals Thoreau's insertion of Scriptural expression for effect. For him, Biblical references seem to be functional toward a double impact: technically, such allusions rendered his style more effectual because they invested it with authority and poetic vigor; philosophically, the manipulation of Biblical expression aided him in touching men's hearts and minds through effective argument so that he could "communicate" the "wealth" that he possessed.

A three-part Biblical glossary constitutes both a major purpose and portion of this study. By categorizing the Scriptural references to which Thoreau had recourse and their location in his works, I have tried to demonstrate both Thoreau's dependence on Holy Writ for stylistic purposes and his versatility in handling these Scriptural references which, because skillfully used, give meaning to his work.

Microfilm $3.15; Xerography $11.05. 242 pages.

THOREAU'S SHIFTING STANCE TOWARDS NATURE: A STUDY IN ROMANTICISM.

(Order No. 67-8394)

James Henry McIntosh, Ph.D.
Yale University, 1967

In this dissertation I start with the evidence that Thoreau has not one consistent attitude toward nature, but a variety of attitudes. I attribute this variety to a fertile paradox in his mind: He is aware that he is isolated, apart from nature, but he wishes to see himself as at one with nature, or at least as intimately related to it. Thoreau's consciousness of separation from nature and his will to overcome it links him to European romantics, particularly to Wordsworth and Goethe. The vitality of the work of all three writers derives in part from the tension in their relations with nature. In particular, Thoreau shares with Goethe a passionate wish for a sensuous involvement with nature, while understanding that such an involvement is self-destructive; and he shares with Wordsworth a propensity to cast out nature and give himself over to imagination or mystical experience.

I have tried to write literary criticism of particular works of Thoreau – Walden, "The Shipwreck," "Ktaadn," A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, and some of the early essays and poems – understanding them in terms of his conflicting views of nature. I see his works as consciously or unconsciously organized according to Emerson's principle of polarity. Knowing that nature and man are full of contrary tendencies, Thoreau will sharply point up a pair of opposites in constructing a particular work, in an effort to represent both sides of a divided truth. The play of his mind with polarities is typical of a larger tendency to experiment with opinions, facts and values, so as at last to attain a comprehensiveness in his pictures of nature and himself. Thoreau is continually shifting his stance toward nature so as to be true to his changing experience of nature. As we follow these shifts, we can arrive at a more discriminating sense of the contours of his art and mind.

Microfilm $3.10; Xerography $10.80. 239 pages.

"When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence--that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of reality."--WALDEN.

"How can he remember well his ignorance who has so often to use his knowledge?"--JOURNAL for August 6, 1845.